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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Preliminary Health Investigation Finds Improper Temperatures and Hygienic Practices Source of Denver Rescue Mission Outbreak

Aug. 3, 2012 –Preliminary results of the investigation into a recent foodborne illness outbreak at the Denver Rescue Mission show that improper food temperatures and hygienic practices were the primary contributing factors that led to a July 22 outbreak the Lawrence Street Shelter.

Following the initial reports of illness, Denver Environmental Health (DEH) food safety investigators and Denver Public Health (DPH) Epidemiological staff began an investigation that included observing and inspecting the Denver Rescue Mission's facilities, completing interviews with ill and non-ill people, and conducting lab tests.

The preliminary investigation points to the source as insufficient rapid cooling and re-heating of the smoked turkey, along with improper hygienic practices used in the preparation of the food.

The initial on-site observations led to immediate steps to ensure food safety at the Denver Rescue Mission, while the lab results pointed to a toxin from *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria as the cause of illness. These bacteria are commonly found on the skin and nasal passages of humans and can cause illness if allowed to grow in foods at improper temperatures.

"We have no reason to believe it was anything other than an isolated incident where organizational practices in handling of the food were not followed," says Environmental Public Health Food Supervisor, Abby Davidson. "These practices were documented and immediately corrected by the Denver Rescue Mission's leadership and staff."

While the investigation report is not expected to be finalized for several weeks, the Denver Rescue Mission is implementing ongoing and quarterly public health training courses for staff beginning with the first on August 8, reinforcing current procedures regarding food safety including food handling, cooling and heating practices, hiring additional staff to ensure food safety measures are followed and working cooperatively with Denver Environmental Health and Denver Public Health to ensure safe food handling at Denver Rescue Mission facilities.

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